




Video Chat and Webcams



Live video chat and streaming has become a key way for people to connect, communicate and share their ideas and experiences online. With every smartphone, tablet and laptop possessing a camera, and instant video chat with one person or many people available in a wider number of social media apps and services, it's never been easier to stay in touch with family and friends.

For specific advice on livestreaming, check out the Livestreaming hot topic: www.childnet.com/livestreaming

What do I need to know?

 There are a huge number of positive uses and potential for using video chat services and webcams as tools for communication and a number of sites, apps and services may wish to access your webcam. The advice below can help you minimise the risks associated with webcams and video chatting.

Top Tips

- **Think before you cam**
Always consider who you are chatting to and what you are sharing with them. What you share on camera (including things in the background) can give away personal information. Be aware that webcam or live video footage can also be recorded by someone and then potentially shared and uploaded anywhere online.
- **Online friendship**
On some services you may receive chat requests or invites from people you don't know. Think carefully about who you choose to chat to and why they might want to video chat with you. Live video can be faked so remember that the person you see on camera may not be the person you are actually speaking to. If a site or service has privacy settings, always make use of them to control who can contact you.
- **Webcam content online**
Some video chat services allow you to chat to and see strangers online and may put you at risk of seeing pornographic or violent content or sexual behaviour on camera. You should always report this to the website/service and use blocking tools if available.
- **You can always say no**
People may use video chat to convince you to take part in a dangerous dare, to appear naked on camera or perform sexually suggestive acts. This can then be recorded by the watcher and be potentially used to threaten or blackmail. If someone ever asks you to do or say anything on camera that makes you feel uncomfortable then say no, end the chat and tell an adult you trust. **Remember it is never too late to tell someone.** You can also block or report a user to the website/service if they continue to harass you.
- **Tell someone**
If you have been the subject of inappropriate sexual contact or approach by another person via video chat or any other form of communication then it is vital to tell a trusted adult and to report it to the police via CEOP Command (www.thinkuknow.co.uk).

Technical Advice

- **Emails and links**
Webcams and devices can be affected by viruses so be wary of emails and messages on social networks from strangers that invite you to click on a link or open an attachment. These may actually contain malicious programs which allow the stranger to control your webcam or device remotely.
Always make sure that antivirus and firewall protection is kept up to date on devices that have cameras or use webcams.
- **Think where your webcam is in the home**
Make sure that webcams connected to computers are not located in bedrooms or more private areas of the house. Although it is rare, there have been cases of webcams being hacked by programs/users to take pictures or video without the owner's knowledge. Unplugging the webcam, covering the lens or pointing it at a blank wall when not in use are good steps to take to minimise this risk, as is closing your laptop lid when not in use.
- **Know which services/sites use webcams**
Sites, services and apps may ask for permission to use your webcam. Before you accept, always think carefully about why the service may want to use your camera and who may be able to see the video feed. If in doubt, it is best not to allow the app or site to have access.
- **End calls and log out**
Always make sure you end a video chat when finished and log out of the site or service. This can help prevent anyone from accessing your account or webcam without your knowledge.

Useful Links

www.childnet.com/livestreaming
www.saferinternet.org.uk/young-people
www.saferinternet.org.uk/safety-tools
www.thinkuknow.co.uk